

Black Friday: What streaming video device is best for you and can you get a deal?

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Streaming video has become a staple in U.S. homes, with seven out of 10 homes subscribing to a subscription streaming service.

Another finding from Nielsen: About two-thirds (65%) of homes use a smart TV or internet-connected device to stream that content on a TV, up from 59% in 2018.

But that doesn't mean you might not need another device for a second or third TV. Or you may be looking to upgrade—especially if you have an older Roku device, as some won't play Netflix after Dec. 1.

The good news is that Black Friday is a good time if you are in the market for a new streaming player, as many bargains can be had. Here's a look at the most popular devices and some of the deals available:

Roku

Roku was a video pioneer and has become the most used streaming device in the U.S. Of the connected TV devices (players, smart TVs and other devices) available during the fourth quarter of 2019, Roku is expected to capture about 23%, according to Strategy Analytics. Expected to nab second place is Amazon with 19%.

For Black Friday, Roku has a streaming device at nearly every price point. A limited-edition Roku SE streaming player for HD video will be sold only at Walmart and on Walmart.com for \$18 beginning Thursday Nov. 28 while supplies last.

Also at Walmart: The first Roku TVs sold under the retailer's own brand—a 40-inch HD model (\$98), a 50-inch 4K TV (\$148) and 58-inch 4K TV (\$198)—will be available in stores only on Black Friday.

The Roku Streaming Stick+, which delivers 4K video and has a voice remote, is priced at \$29.99, a \$20 discount off its \$49.99. That deal and others can be found through Dec. 2 at Roku.com and at retailers.

Its top-of-the-line streaming player, the Roku Ultra, is priced at \$49.99, \$50 off the regular price (Nov. 23-Dec. 2). And Roku's newest product, the Roku Smart Soundbar, which has the workings of a Roku Ultra built inside, will be selling for \$149.99, \$30 off the regular price, at Best Buy and Roku.com (to Dec. 7). All new Roku device purchases include three free months of Hulu and Pandora Premium.

As for those older Roku models that won't play Netflix after Dec. 1, these are the ones with that technical limitation: Roku SD, Roku HD-XR, Roku HD, and Roku XD.

Pro: If you have a mix of Apple and Amazon commitments, Roku can handle most of your needs (it has Apple TV, Amazon Prime Video and Amazon Music apps). And its Roku Channel has a growing library of thousands of free to watch, ad-supported movies and TV, with a special kids and family section.

Con: A few more ads in the interface is the only dig that Reviewed.com has about the Roku Ultra in its roundup of the best streaming devices.

Apple TV

Apple has announced no specific bargains on its Apple TV streaming device, which is available in two models: the Apple TV 4K starts at \$179 for a 32GB version; a 64GB model is \$199. If you don't plan to watch in 4K, you can opt for the \$149 Apple TV HD.

However, Best Buy has the 32GB Apple TV 4K at \$10 off, with free Apple Music for three months in addition to the one year of Apple TV+.

Apple does have an ongoing promotion giving buyers of Apple TV (or any other new Apple device), a free year of Apple TV+, the new subscription service launched in November (\$4.99 monthly), which has

original TV series such as "The Morning Show," starring Jennifer Aniston, Reese Witherspoon and Steve Carell.

Beyond that, you can add all the most popular apps from Acorn TV to Starz, including Amazon Prime Video.

Pro: Apple TV is sleek and has a familiar feel if you are Apple-centric. And if you have a Dolby Atmos home theater system, the Apple TV 4K supports that immersive sound format with some of the movies and TV shows it distributes, as well as Amazon Video, Vudu and Netflix. (Roku and other players support Dolby Atmos on some content, too.)

Con: Apple TV is pricey compared to the competition and, Reviewed.com noted, the remote is not as full-featured as Roku's.

Amazon Fire TV

Amazon has bargains through Black Friday on its wide variety of Fire TV devices. The Amazon Fire TV Stick with Alexa Voice Remote, which lets you stream HD video is priced at \$19.99, \$20 below the regular price. If you have (or plan to get) a 4K TV, the Fire TV Stick 4K with Alexa Voice Remote is \$25 off, priced at \$24.99. Want to add an Echo Dot and let it control your TV? You can get the Fire TV Stick 4K with Alexa Voice Remote and Echo Dot for just \$46.99 (a total savings of almost \$53).

Amazon's newest 4K streaming device, the Fire TV Cube is priced at \$89.99, a \$30 discount. The cube has a faster processor, 16GB of storage vs. 8GB in the Fire TV sticks, as well as built-in Alexa support and an Ethernet connection.

Amazon's Fire TV Stick 4K and Cube also have some high-end features including support for Dolby Atmos and high-dynamic range (HDR and

its other flavors Dolby Vision and HDR10+) for increased clarity, contrast and color.

Pro: An Amazon device fits best with a home that embraces the Amazon ecosystem—if you have Amazon Prime some video and music is already free. And you can add premium channels such as HBO, Showtime and Acorn TV through your Amazon account. But, thankfully, Amazon and Apple now play nice and have each others apps in their streaming stores.

Con: The interface may not be as elegant as Apple's or as easy to use as Roku's for some users.

Google Chromecast

Google's Chromecast (\$35), which delivers HD video, can be a low-cost way to get net-delivered content on your television.

The device connects directly into an HDMI port on your TV. (If you have a 4K TV, opt for the \$69 Chromecast Ultra, which delivers 4K HDR video..

Once you have set up the device, you simply choose what you want to watch on your TV using your smartphone, tablet or your computer. That includes the most popular apps such as Netflix, ESPN, Disney+, Amazon Prime Video, AT&T TV, Sling TV, Hulu, HBO, Showtime, and Spotify.

Best Buy, Target and Walmart are among retailers planning Black Friday pricing with the Chromecast \$10 off (\$25) and the Ultra \$20 off (\$45).

Pro: The Chromecast "is still the best choice for tech-savvy users on a budget," says Reviewed.com.

Con: The price is right, but everyone won't find Chromecast an easy

plug, play and chill solution.

NVIDIA Shield TV

Graphics giant NVIDIA in October refreshed its Android TV-based streaming players with two new models, the Shield TV (\$149.99) and Shield TV Pro (\$199.99).

Shield TV lets you add Amazon Prime Video, Disney+, Vudu and nearly every other popular video app (except Apple TV+). And some such as Disney+, Prime Video, Vudu, and Movies Anywhere also support Dolby Vision and Dolby Atmos audio.

But Shield TV also serves as a video gaming [device](#), letting you play computer games you already own on NVIDIA's GeForce Now cloud gaming service, which is currently in beta testing.

You can use a Bluetooth video game controller—or opt for one from NVIDIA (\$59.99). The lower-priced Shield TV has a tubular shape and includes a new remote with instant Netflix button. The higher-priced model has additional memory, which lets you record and broadcast your games on Twitch and play Advanced Android games including "Portal 2 and Doom 3."

But if you are just watching movies, the Shield TV can make your non-4K [video](#) look better with AI-enhanced upscaling. It has Google Assistant built-in and you can access Google photos, calendar, and other content.

Pro: For Google-centric homes, Shield TV is a higher-tech option than the Chromecast. And if you are looking for a way to play online games, the Shield TV has you covered there, too.

Con: If you just want to Netflix (and perhaps, Hulu, or Amazon Prime Video) and chill, Shield TV may be more than you need.

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